



33 Ways of Developing
AL-KHUSHOO'
Humility and Devotion in Prayer

٣٣ سبباً للخشوع في الصلاة

Muhammad Ṣāliḥ Al-Munajjid



الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي



IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



33 Ways of Developing
KHUSHOO'
(Humility and Devotion in Prayer)

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Arabic honorific symbols used in this book

(ﷻ): *Subhânahu wa Ta‘âlâ* — ‘The Exalted’

(ﷺ): *Şalla-Allâhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam* — ‘Blessings and peace
be upon him’

(ﷺ): *‘Alayhis-Salâm* — ‘Peace be upon him’

(ﷻ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘Anhu* — ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

(ﷻ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘Anhâ* — ‘May Allah be pleased with her’

Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ - إ	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ـ	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih, or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when in uninterrupted speech	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ḥ
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do</i> , <i>muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this</i> , <i>father</i> , and <i>with</i>	dh
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>art</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled r, as with Spanish words	r

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo</i> , <i>easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so</i> , <i>messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship</i> , <i>ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing ‘the’ farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in ‘rouge’	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill</i> , <i>effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word <i>Allah</i> , it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
هـ - ه - هـ	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و (as a vowel)	long u, as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yet</i> and <i>yard</i>	y
ي (as a vowel)	long e, as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh</i> - <i>oh</i> !	' (Omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs:

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أَوْ ، و	Long o, as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw, ow
أَي ، يَ	Long 'a', as in <i>able</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*):

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
fathah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
د Dammah	shorter version of oo	u
س shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	Double letter
° sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	Absence of vowel

About the word *Lord*

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’, and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘Lord So-and-so’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

THE EDITOR

In the Name of Allah, the All-Compassionate, All-Merciful

KHUSHOO‘

Humility and Devotion in Prayer

Praise be to Allah (ﷻ), Lord of the Worlds, Who has said in His Holy Book, the Glorious Qur’an:

﴿... وَاقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣٨)

﴿...and stand before Allah with obedience.﴾ (Qur’an 2: 238)

And has said concerning the prayer:

﴿... وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٤٥)

﴿...and truly it is extremely heavy and hard except for those who are humble and devoted.﴾ (Qur’an 2: 45)

Peace and blessings be upon the leader of the pious, the chief of all those who are humble and devoted, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, and on all his family and companions.

*Ṣalâh*¹ is the greatest pillar of Islam after the *shahâdah*,² and khushoo‘ in prayer is required, according to Islamic law.

¹ *ṣalâh* or *ṣalât*: formal prayer: a combination of physical postures, recitation and supplication

² *shahâdah*: uttering *lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, ‘there is none worthy of worship other than Allah’

When Iblees,³ the enemy of Allah, vowed to mislead and tempt the children of Adam and said:

﴿ثُمَّ لَا يَنبَغُهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ...﴾ (١٧)

(سورة الأعراف: ١٧)

“Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left...” (Qur'an 7: 17)

— one of his most significant plots became to divert people from ṣalâh by all possible means, and to whisper to them during their prayer so as to deprive them of the joy of this worship and cause them to lose the reward for it. As khushoo' will be the first thing to disappear from the earth, and we are living in the last era of existence on earth, the words of Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه are particularly pertinent to us: “The first thing of your religion that you will lose is khushoo', and the last thing that you will lose of your religion is ṣalâh. There may be a person praying who has no goodness in him, and soon you will enter the mosque and not find anyone who has khushoo'.”⁴

Because of what every person knows about him or herself, and because of the complaints that one hears from many people about waswâs (insinuating ‘whispers’ or thoughts from Satan) during the prayer, and the loss of khushoo', the need for some discussion of this matter has become quite pressing. The following is a reminder to myself and to my Muslim brothers and sisters, and I ask Allah to make it of benefit. Allah ﷻ says,

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ﴾ (٢)

(سورة المؤمنون: ١-٢)

³ Iblees: another name for Satan in Arabic

⁴ Madârij as-Sâlikeen by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, vol. 1, p. 521

«Successful indeed are the believers, those who offer their prayers with all solemnity and full submissiveness.» (*Qur'an* 23: 1-2)

That is, fearing Allah and in a calm manner. Khushoo' means calmness, serenity, tranquillity, dignity and humility. What makes a person have this khushoo' is fear of Allah and the sense that He is always watching.⁵ Khushoo' means that the heart stands before the Lord in humility and submission.⁶

It was reported that Mujâhid said regarding this verse: «...and stand before Allah with devotion.» (*Qur'an* 2: 238) "Part of devotion is to bow, to be solemn and submissive, to lower one's gaze and to humble oneself out of fear of Allah, may He be glorified."⁷

The site of khushoo' is the heart, and its effects are manifested in the physical body. The various faculties follow the heart: if the heart is corrupted by negligence or insinuating whispers from Satan, the worship of the body's faculties will also be corrupt. The heart is like a king and the faculties are like his troops who follow his orders and go where they are commanded. If the king is deposed, his followers are lost, which is like what happens when the heart does not worship properly.

Concealing your Khushoo'

Making a show of khushoo' is condemned. Hudhayfah (رضي الله عنه) used to say, "Beware of hypocritical humility and devotion." He was asked, "What is hypocritical humility and devotion?" He said, "When the body shows khushoo' but there is no khushoo' in

⁵ *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, Dâr ash-Sha'b, vol. 6, p. 414

⁶ *Madârij as-Sâlikeen* by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, vol. 1, p. 520

⁷ *Risâlah Ta'dheem Qadr aş-Şalâh* by Aḥmad Fareed, vol. 1, p. 188

the heart.” Fuḍayl ibn ‘Ayâd (ؒ) said: “It was disliked for a person to show more khushoo‘ than he had in his heart.” One of them⁸ saw a man showing khushoo‘ in his shoulders and body, and told him, “Khushoo‘ is here,” and he pointed to his chest, “not here,” — and he pointed to his shoulders.⁹

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said, explaining the difference between the khushoo‘ of true faith and hypocritical khushoo‘:

The khushoo‘ of true faith is when the heart feels aware and humble before the greatness and glory of Allah, and is filled with awe, fear and shyness, so that the heart is utterly humbled before Allah and broken, as it were, with fear, shyness, love and the recognition of Allah’s blessings and of its own sins. So, no doubt, khushoo‘ of the heart is followed by khushoo‘ of the body. As for hypocritical khushoo‘, it is something that is put on with a great show, but there is no khushoo‘ in the heart. One of the Companions used to say: I seek refuge with Allah from hypocritical khushoo‘. It was asked of him: What is hypocritical khushoo‘? He replied: When the body appears to have khushoo‘ but there is no khushoo‘ in the heart. The person who truly feels khushoo‘ before Allah is a person who no longer feels the flames of physical desire; his (or her) heart is pure and is filled with the light of the greatness of Allah. His (or her) own selfish desires have died because of the fear and awe which have filled his (or her) heart to overflowing so that his (or her) physical faculties have calmed down, his (or her) heart has become dignified and feels secure in the remembrance of Allah, and

⁸ The author does not specify, but this is probably either a Companion or a follower of the Companions. (Editor)

⁹ *Madârij as-Sâlikeen* by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, vol. 1, p. 521

tranquillity descends upon him (or her) from the Lord. (This person) has become humble (*mukhbit*) before Allah, and the one who is humble is the one who is assured. Land that is 'mukhbit' is land that is low-lying, in which water settles, so the heart that is 'mukhbit' is humble and content, like a low-lying spot of land into which water flows and settles. The sign of this is that a person prostrates to his (or her) Lord out of respect and humility, and never raises his (or her) head until he (or she) meets Him. The arrogant heart, on the other hand, is one that is content with its arrogance and raises itself up like an elevated portion of land in which water never settles. This is the *khushoo'* of true faith.

Hypocritical *khushoo'* demonstrates the attitude of a person who tries to make a great show of *khushoo'*, but deep down he (or she) is still filled with desires. So on the outside the person appears to have *khushoo'*, but the snake of the valley and the lion of the forest reside within, watching for prey.¹⁰

According to Ibn Katheer:

Khushoo' in prayer happens when a person empties his heart for it (prayer), and focuses on it to the exclusion of all else, and prefers it to everything else. Only then does he find comfort and joy in it, as the Prophet (ﷺ — blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: «... and my joy has been made in *ṣalâh*.»¹¹

Allah has mentioned: ﴿*al-khâshi'een wal-khâshi'ât* [men and women who are humble before their Lord]﴾, and says that possessing humility and devotion is one of the qualities of those

¹⁰ *Ar-Rooḥ* by Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 314, Daar al-Fikr, Jordan

¹¹ *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, vol. 5, p. 456. The hadith is in *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 3, p. 128 and *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'* by al-Albâni, hadith no. 3124.

who are chosen. He tells us that He has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (paradise).¹²

One of the benefits of khushoo' is that it makes prayer easier for a person. Allah (ﷻ) tells us:

﴿وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٤٥)

﴿And seek help in patience and prayer, and truly it is extremely heavy and hard except for those who are humble and devoted.﴾

(Qur'an 2: 45)

The meaning is that the burden of prayer is heavy indeed, except for those who have khushoo'.¹³ Khushoo' is very important, but it is something that is easily lost and is rarely seen, especially in our own times, which according to scholars is the final stage of existence on earth. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The first thing to be lifted up (taken away) from this Ummah¹⁴ will be khushoo', until you will see no one who has khushoo'.»¹⁵

One of the pious predecessors said:

Ṣalâh is like a slave girl offered to a mighty king. What do you think if he is offered a slave girl who is paralysed or one-eyed or blind, or missing an arm or a leg or is sick or ugly? Then how about the prayer which Allah's slave offers? And what if this king is given a slave girl who is dead and has no

¹² In Qur'an 33: 35

¹³ *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, vol. 1, p. 125

¹⁴ *Ummah*: community or nation: *usu.* used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims

¹⁵ Reported by Al-Haythami in *Al-Majma'*, vol. 2, p. 136; It was reported by Aṭ-Ṭabarâni in *Al-Kabeer*, and its chain of narrators is reliable. See also *Ṣaḥeeḥ at-Targheeb* by Al-Albâni, hadith no. 543; Shaykh al-Albâni said it was authentic.

soul in her? So how about the prayer which Allah's slave offers and by means of which he (or she) seeks to draw close to the Lord, may He be exalted? For Allah is Good and only accepts that which is good, and prayer that has no soul in it is not a good deed. It is no good freeing a slave who has no soul in him.¹⁶

Rulings on khushoo'

According to the most correct view, khushoo' is obligatory. Shaykh al-Islam¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyah said:

Allah, the Almighty, mentions: ﴿And seek help in patience and prayer, and truly it is extremely heavy and hard except for those who are humble and devoted.﴾ (Qur'an 2: 45)

This implies condemnation of those who are not humble and devoted. Condemnation only applies when something obligatory is not done, or when something forbidden is done. If those who do not have khushoo' are to be condemned, this indicates that khushoo' is obligatory. The fact that khushoo' is obligatory is also indicated by these verses:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾﴾

(سورة المؤمنون: ١-٢)

﴿أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾﴾

(سورة المؤمنون: ١٠-١١)

¹⁶ *Madârij as-Sâlikeen* by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, vol. 1, p. 526

¹⁷ 'Shaykh al-Islam' is an honorary title given to Ibn Taymiyah due to his respected position as a preeminent scholar of Islam. (Editor)

«Successful indeed are the believers, those who offer their prayers with all solemnity and full submissiveness... These are indeed the inheritors, who shall inherit paradise. They shall dwell therein forever.»
(*Qur'an* 23: 1-2, 10-11)

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, tells us that these are the ones who will inherit paradise, which implies that no one else will do so... *Khushoo'* is obligatory in prayer, and this includes calmness and submissiveness [the original says '*khushoo'*'; perhaps what is meant is *khudoo'*, meaning submission, humility]. Whoever pecks like a crow in his (or her) prostrations does not have *khushoo'*, and whoever does not raise his (or her) head fully from *rukoo'*¹⁸ and pause for a while before going down to prostrate is not calm, because calmness implies doing things at a measured pace; thus the person who does not do things at a measured pace is not calm. Whoever is not calm does not have *khushoo'* in his (or her) bowing or prostration, and whoever does not have *khushoo'* is a sinner... Another indication that humility and devotion in prayer is obligatory is the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) warned those who do not have *khushoo'* such as the one who lifts his gaze up to the sky (in prayer), because this movement and raising one's gaze goes against the idea of humility and devotion...¹⁹

Concerning the virtues of *khushoo'* and as a warning to the one who neglects it, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah has made five prayers obligatory. Whoever does *wudoo'*²⁰ properly for them, prays them on time, does one's bowing properly and has perfect humility and devotion, it is a promise from Allah that he will be

¹⁸ *rukoo'*: the act of bowing (in prayer)

¹⁹ *Majmoo' al-Fatâwâ* by Ibn Taymiyyah, vol. 22, pp. 553-558

²⁰ *wudoo'*: ablution required before prayer or touching the Qur'an

forgiven, but whoever does not do this, has no such promise — if Allah wishes, He will forgive him, and if He wishes, He will punish him.»²¹

Concerning the virtues of khushoo‘, the Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «Whoever does wudoo‘ and does it well, then performs two units of prayer, focusing on them completely (according to another report: and does not think of anything else), will be forgiven all his previous sins (according to another report: will be guaranteed paradise).»²²

When we look at the factors that help us to have humility and devotion in prayer, we find that they may be divided into two types: strategies that help you to have and to strengthen khushoo‘, and strategies that ward off whatever can reduce and weaken khushoo‘. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) explained, “Two things help us to [develop khushoo‘]: a strong desire to do what is obligatory, and weakening any distractions.”

The strong desire to do what is required

Ibn Taymiyah said:

[This means that] a person strives hard to focus on what he is saying and doing, pondering the meanings of the Qur’an recitation, phrases in remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) and supplications, and keeping in mind the fact that he is speaking to Allah as if he sees Him, for when he is standing in prayer, he is talking to his Lord.

²¹ Abu Dawood, hadith no. 425; authenticated in *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 3242

²² Bukhari, *Al-Bagha* edition, hadith no. 158; An-Nasâ’i, vol. 1, p. 95; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 6166

Ihsân [in worship, according to the hadith²³] means «...that you worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, (know that) He can see you.» The more the slave tastes the sweetness of ṣalâh, the more attracted he will be to it, and this has to do with the strength of his faith.

The means of strengthening faith are many, and this is why the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say: «In your world, women and perfume have been made dear to me, and my joy is in prayer.» According to another hadith, he (ﷺ) said: «Let us find comfort in prayer, O Bilâl.» He (ﷺ) did not say, “Let us get it over and done with.”

Weakening any and all distractions

Ibn Taymiyah wrote:

This means striving to push away all distractions that make you think of something other than the prayer itself, and warding off thoughts that keep your mind off the purpose of the prayer. This is something which differs from one person to another, because the extent of insinuating whispers has to do with the extent of one's doubts and desires, and with the heart's focus and dependence on what it loves and its efforts to avoid what it dislikes.²⁴

On the basis of this categorisation, we will now discuss some of the means of developing *khushoo*‘.

Striving to gain and strengthen *khushoo*‘

This can be achieved in several ways, such as the following:

²³ *hadith* (*hadeeth*): a saying or action of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers

²⁴ *Majmoo‘ al-Fatâwâ*, vol. 22, pp. 606-607

1. Preparing yourself properly for prayer

You can achieve this through the following steps:

- ✓ By repeating the words of the *adhân*²⁵ after the *mu'adh-dhin*,²⁶
- ✓ By uttering the supplication to be recited after the *adhân*: 'O Allah, Lord of this perfect call and the prayer to be offered, grant Muhammad the privilege (of interceding) and also the eminence, and resurrect him to the praised position that You have promised.' [*Allâhumma Rabba hâdhihi id-da'wati at-tâmmah waş-şalâtil-qâ'imah, âti Muhammadan al-waseelata wal-faḍeelah, wab'ath-hu al-maqâm al-mahmood alladhi wa'adtah.*]
- ✓ Reciting supplications between the *adhân* and the *iqâmah*,²⁷
- ✓ Doing the ablution properly, saying '*Bismillâh*' before it and remembering Allah verbally and saying the supplications after it: 'I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, He has no partner or associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.' [*Ash-hadu an lâ ilâha illâ Allâh, wahdahu lâ shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa rasooluh.*] 'O Allah, make me one of those who repent and make me one of those who purify themselves.' [*Allâhumma ij'alni min at-tawwâbeen waj'alni min al-mutaṭahhireen.*]
- ✓ Using a *miswâk*²⁸ to cleanse and perfume your mouth that is going to recite the Qur'an in a short while, because the

²⁵ *adhân*: the call to prayer

²⁶ *mu'adh-dhin*: caller to prayer; one who makes the *adhân*

²⁷ *iqâmah*: the call to rise for prayer, given when the prayer is about to begin

²⁸ *miswâk* or *siwâk*: a small twig (*usu.* of the Arâk tree) used as a toothbrush

Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Purify your mouths for the Qur'an.»²⁹

- ✓ Wearing your best and cleanest clothes, because Allah says:

﴿يَبْنَیْ مَادَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٣١)

«O' Children of Adam! Take your adornment [by wearing your clean clothes] for every prayer...» (Qur'an 7: 31)

Allah is most deserving of seeing us in our 'adornment' for Him. Clean, pleasant-smelling clothes are also more comfortable and relaxing, but they should not be like our clothes for sleeping or working in.

- ✓ We should also prepare ourselves by covering our 'awrah³⁰ properly, purifying the spot where we are going to pray, getting ready early and waiting for the prayer, and making the rows straight and solid, without any gaps, because (according to an authentic hadith) the devils come in through the gaps in the rows.

2. Moving at a measured pace during prayer

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to move at a measured pace during *ṣalâh*, allowing every bone to return to its place.³¹ He commanded

²⁹ Reported by Al-Bazzâr, who commented, "We do not have it with any better chain than this." *Kashf al-Astâr*, vol. 1, p. 242. Al-Haythami said that its narrators were trustworthy. (in vol. 2, p. 99). Al-Albâni noted that its chain was good. (*Silsilat al-Aḥâdeeth aṣ-Ṣaḥeeḥah* by Al-Albâni, hadith no. 1213)

³⁰ 'awrah: the part of a person's body that must be screened from public view; for males it is the area between the navel and the knees, and for females it is everything except the hands and the face

³¹ Its chain is classified as sound in *Ṣifât aṣ-Ṣalâh*, p. 134, 11th ed. Ibn Khuzaymah also classified it as authentic, as mentioned by Ibn Ḥajr in *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 2, p. 308.

those who were not doing their prayer properly to do this too. He said: «None of you has prayed properly until he does this.»³²

Abu Qatâdah (ؓ) narrated: «The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The worst type of thief is the one who steals from his prayer. I said: O Messenger of Allah, how can a person steal from his prayer? He (ﷺ) replied: By not bowing and prostrating properly.»³³

Abu ‘Abdullâh al-Ash‘ari (ؓ) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The one who does not bow properly, and pecks in prostrations, is like a starving man who eats only one or two dates; it does not do him any good at all.»³⁴

If you do not move at a measured pace in your prayer, you cannot have khushoo‘, because haste is a barrier to khushoo‘ and pecking like a crow is a barrier to reward.

3. Remembering death while praying

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Remember death in your prayer, for the man who remembers death during his prayer is bound to pray properly, and pray the prayer of a man who does not think that he will pray any other prayer.»³⁵

The Prophet (ﷺ) also advised Abu Ayyoob (ؓ): «When you stand up to pray, pray (as if it were) a farewell prayer,»³⁶ meaning the prayer of one who thinks that he will not pray another prayer. The person who is praying will no doubt die, and there is

³² Abu Dâwood, vol. 1, p. 536, hadith no. 858

³³ Aḥmad and Al-Hâkim, vol. 1, p. 229; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 997

³⁴ Reported by Aṭ-Ṭabarâni in *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer*, vol. 4, p. 115; Al-Albâni classified it as reliable.

³⁵ *Silsilat al-Aḥâdeeth aṣ-Şaḥeeḥah*, hadith no. 1421. It was reported from As-Suyooṭi that Ibn Ḥajar classified this hadeeth as reliable.

³⁶ Aḥmad, vol. 5, p. 412; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 742

some prayer that will be his last prayer, so let him have khushoo‘ in the prayer that he is doing, for he does not know whether this will be his last prayer.

4. Thinking about and interacting with the verses and phrases in remembrance of Allah being recited during the prayer

The Qur’an was revealed to be pondered over. Allah says:

﴿كُتِبَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)﴾

(سورة ص: ٢٩)

«[This is] a Book [the Qur’an] which We have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over its verses, and that people of understanding may remember.» (Qur’an 38: 29)

You cannot ponder over its verses unless you have some knowledge of the meaning of what you are reciting, so that you can think about it and be moved to tears by it. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا (٧٣)﴾

(سورة الفرقان: ٧٣)

«And those who, when they are reminded of the *âyât* [proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, and revelations] of their Lord, do not fall deaf and blind at that.» (Qur’an 25: 73)

Thus the importance of studying *tafseer*³⁷ is quite clear. Ibn Jareer (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “I am astonished at people who read the Qur’an and do not know what it means. How

³⁷ *tafseer*: exegesis, commentary, or explanation of the meanings (*usu.* of Qur’anic verses)

can they enjoy reading it?”³⁸ For this reason it is important for you to look at a tafseer, even if it is abridged, when you are reading the Qur'an.³⁹ At the very least the reader could consult a specialized dictionary explaining difficult or unusual terminology in the Qur'an.

Another way of helping yourself to ponder over the meanings is to repeat the verses, because this will help one to think deeply and look again at the meanings. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to do this. It was reported that he once spent a night repeating one verse until morning came. The verse was:

﴿إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ وَإِن تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

(سورة المائدة: ١١٨)

«If you punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily You, only You, are the Almighty, the Wise.»

(Qur'an 5: 118)⁴⁰

Another way of helping yourself ponder over the meanings is to interact with the âyât. «Hudhayfah said: I prayed with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) one night...he was reciting at length. If he recited a verse that mentioned the glorification of Allah, he would

³⁸ *Muqaddimat Tafseer at-Tabari* by Mahmood Shâkir, vol. 1, p. 10

³⁹ The author cites several works that have not been translated into English. The reader is encouraged to seek out English-language translations of tafseer. For example, s/he could read the abridged translation of the *Tafseer* by Ibn Katheer, or the abridged version of the commentary of Sayyid Abul 'Ala Mawdoodi, entitled *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*. (Editor)

⁴⁰ Reported by Ibn Khuzaymah, vol. 1, p. 271 and Ahmad, vol. 5, p. 149; *Şifât aş-Şalâh*, p. 102) Shaykh al-Albâni's book *Şifât aş-Şalâh* is available in English under the title *The Prophet's Prayer Described*, by Shaykh Muhammad Nâsir-ud-Deen al-Albâni, translated by Usama ibn Suhaib Hasan, Al-Haneef Publications, Ipswich, UK, 1993 (Translator)

say *subhân Allâh*;⁴¹ if it mentioned a question, he would ask a question; if it mentioned seeking refuge with Allah, he would seek refuge with Allah.»⁴² According to another report, Hudhayfah said: «I prayed with the Messenger of Allah, and if he recited a verse that mentioned mercy, he would ask for mercy; if he recited a verse that mentioned punishment, he would seek refuge with Allah, and if he recited a verse that mentioned how Allah was unlike any of His creation, he would say *subhân Allâh*.»⁴³ This was reported concerning *qiyâm al-layl* (the night prayer or *tahajjud*).

One of the Companions — Qatâdah ibn an-Nu'mân (رضي الله عنه) — prayed during the night and did not recite anything but *Qul huwa Allâhu Aḥad*, repeating it and not adding anything more.⁴⁴

Sa'eed ibn 'Ubayd at-Ṭâ'i said, "I heard Sa'eed ibn Jubayr leading them in prayer during the month of Ramadan, and he was repeating these verses:

﴿... فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ إِذِ الْأَغْلُلُ فِيَّ اعْتَقَتْهُمْ وَأَسْلَسَ لِيْلُ يُسْحَبُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ فِي الْحَمِيمِ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾﴾
(سورة غافر: ٧٠-٧٢)

﴿...they will come to know, when iron collars will be clasped around their necks, and chains; they shall be dragged along through boiling water, then they will be burned in the Fire.﴾ (Qur'an 40: 70-72)

Al-Qâsim said: "I saw Sa'eed ibn Jubayr standing in prayer during the night and reciting:

﴿وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ... ﴿٢٨١﴾﴾
(سورة البقرة: ٢٨١)

⁴¹ *subhân Allâh*: glory be to Allah

⁴² *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 772

⁴³ *Risâlah Ta'dheem Qadr aṣ-Ṣalâh* by Aḥmad Fareed, vol. 1, p. 327

⁴⁴ Bukhari, *Faṭḥ al-Bâri*, vol. 9, p. 59; Aḥmad, vol. 3, p. 43

«And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every person shall be paid what he earned...» (*Qur'an* 2: 281) — and repeating it twenty-odd times.”

A man of Qays who was known by the nickname Abu ‘Abdullâh said, “We stayed with Al-Ḥasan one night, and he got up to pray. He prayed and did not stop repeating this verse until just before dawn:

﴿... وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا...﴾ (سورة إبراهيم: ٣٤)

«...and if you count the Blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them...» (*Qur'an* 14: 34)

When morning came, we said, ‘O Abu Sa‘eed, you did not recite any more than this one verse all night.’ He replied, ‘I learn a great deal from it: I do not glance at anything but I see a blessing in it, but what we do not know about Allah’s blessings is far greater.’”⁴⁵

Haroon ibn Rabâb al-Usaydi used to get up at night to pray tahajjud, and he would repeat this verse until daybreak:

﴿... يٰلَيْلِنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نَكْذِبُ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٢٧)

«...Would that we were but sent back (to the world)! Then we would not deny the âyât of our Lord, and we would be believers!»

(*Qur'an* 6: 27)

— and weep until daybreak.

Another way of helping yourself to ponder over the meanings is to memorize the Qur’an and various phrases of remembrance to be recited during different parts of the prayer, so that you may recite them and think about their meanings.

⁴⁵ *At-Tidhkâr lil-Qurṭubî*, p. 125

There is no doubt that these actions — thinking about the meanings, repeating and interacting with the words — are among the greatest means of increasing khushoo‘, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ١٠٩)

﴿And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility [khushoo‘].﴾ (Qur’an 17: 109)

The following is a moving story that illustrates the Prophet’s khushoo‘, as well as explaining how it is obligatory to think of the meaning of the verses. «‘Aṭā’ said: Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr and I entered upon ‘Ā’ishah (رضي الله عنها) and Ibn ‘Umayr said to her: Tell us of the most amazing thing you saw on the part of the Messenger of Allah. She wept and said: He got up one night and said: O ‘Ā’ishah, leave me to worship my Lord. I said: By Allah, I love to be close to you, and I love what makes you happy. So he got up and purified himself, then he stood and prayed. He kept weeping until his lap got wet, then he wept and kept weeping until the floor got wet. Bilāl came to tell him that it was time to pray, and when he saw him weeping, he said: O Messenger of Allah, you are weeping when Allah has forgiven you all your past and future sins? He said: Should I not be a grateful slave? Tonight some verses have been revealed to me; woe to the one who recites them and does not think about what is in them:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٩٠)

﴿Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth,...﴾

(Qur’an 3: 190)»⁴⁶

One example of interacting with the verses is to say “Āmeen” after the recitation of Soorat al-Fâṭihah, which brings a

⁴⁶ Reported by Ibn Hībān; al-Albānī said that its chain was good.

great reward. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If the imam says ‘âmeen,’ then say ‘âmeen’ too, for whoever says ‘âmeen’ and it coincides with the ‘âmeen’ of the angels, will have all his previous sins forgiven.»⁴⁷ Another example is responding to the imam when he says, “*Sami‘ Allâhu li man ḥamidah*” (Allah hears the one who praises Him); the members of the congregation should say, “*Rabbanâ wa laka al-ḥamd*” (Our Lord, to You belongs all praise). This also brings a great reward. «Rifâ‘ah ibn Râfi’ az-Zirqi said: One day we were praying behind the Prophet (ﷺ). When he raised his head, he said: *Sami‘ Allâhu li man ḥamidah*, and a man behind him said: *Rabbanâ wa laka al-ḥamd ḥamdan katheeran ṭayyiban mubârakan feeh* (Our Lord to You belongs all praise, much praise that is good and blessed). When he (ﷺ) finished (praying), he asked: Who is the one who spoke? The man said: I. He (ﷺ) said: I saw thirty-odd angels rushing to see who would write it down first.»⁴⁸

5. Pausing at the end of each verse

This is more helpful in understanding and thinking about the meaning, and it is the *Sunnah*⁴⁹ of the Prophet (ﷺ), as Umm Salamah (رضي الله عنها) described how the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would recite *Bismillâh ir-Raḥmân ir-Raḥeem*, and according to one report, he would pause, then say: *Al-ḥamdu lillâhi Rabb il-‘âlameen, ar-Raḥmân, ar-Raḥeem*. Then according to one report, he would pause, then say: *Mâliki yawm ad-deen*, and he would break up his recitation verse by verse.⁵⁰ Pausing at the end of each

⁴⁷ Bukhari, hadith no. 747

⁴⁸ Reported by Bukhari, as recorded in *Faṭḥ al-Bâri*, vol. 2, p. 284

⁴⁹ *Sunnah*: the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that together with the Qur’an forms the basis of Islamic law

⁵⁰ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 4001; classified as authentic by Al-Albâni in=

verse is a Sunnah, even if the meaning continues into the next verse.

6. Reciting in slow, rhythmic tones (*tarteel*) and reciting in a sonorous voice

As Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿... وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا﴾ (سورة المزمل: ٤)

﴿...and recite the Qur'an in a slow rhythmic tone.﴾ (Qur'an 73: 4)

The recitation of the Prophet (ﷺ) was clear, with each letter pronounced distinctly.⁵¹ Muslim narrated: «The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would recite a soorah in such slow, rhythmic tones that it would be longer than would seem possible.»⁵² This slow, measured pace of recitation is more conducive to reflection and khushoo' than a hurried, hasty reading.

Another way of increasing your khushoo' is by making your voice beautiful when reciting. This is something that was advised by the Prophet (ﷺ), as when he said: «Beautify the Qur'an with your voices, for a fine voice increases the Qur'an in beauty.»⁵³

Beautifying it with one's voice does not mean elongating the vowels and giving it a tune (like singing) in the manner of disrespectful people; it means beautifying one's voice with the fear of Allah, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Truly, the one who has

=*Irwâ' al-Ghaleel*, vol. 2, p. 60, where its chains of narration are described

⁵¹ *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 6, p. 294, with an authentic chain; *Şifât aş-Şalâh*, p. 105

⁵² Muslim, hadith no. 733

⁵³ *Al-Hâkim*, vol. 1, p. 575; *Şaheeh al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 3581

one of the finest voices for reciting the Qur'an is the one whom, when you hear him reciting, you think: He fears Allah.»⁵⁴

7. Knowing that Allah responds to prayers

In a *hadith qudsi*,⁵⁵ the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has said: I have divided the prayer between Myself and My slave: into two halves, and My slave shall have what he has asked for. When the slave says: *Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds*, Allah (ﷻ) says: My slave has praised Me. When the slave says: *The Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy*, Allah (ﷻ) says: My slave has extolled me. When the slave says: *Master of the Day of Judgement*, Allah (ﷻ) says: My slave has glorified me. When the slave says: *It is You alone we worship and it is You alone we ask for help*, Allah (ﷻ) says: This is between Me and My slave, and My slave shall have what he asked for. When the slave says: *Guide us to the Straight Path, the path of those whom You have favoured, not the path of those who have incurred Your anger, nor of those who have gone astray*, Allah (ﷻ) says: All these are for My slave, and My slave shall have what he asked for.»⁵⁶

This is a great and important hadith. If everyone kept it in mind when they prayed, they would attain immense khushoo' and this special soorah would have a great impact on them. How could it be otherwise, when you feel that your Lord is addressing you and giving you what you are asking for?

⁵⁴ Ibn Mâjah, vol. 1, p. 1339; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 2202

⁵⁵ *hadith qudsi*: 'sacred hadith': a hadith communicated to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) by Allah, but that is not part of the Qur'an

⁵⁶ *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, 'The Book of the Prayer'; The words in italics are the translation of the meaning of *Soorat al-Fâtîḥah*. (Translator)

This ‘conversation’ with Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty must be respected and accorded its proper value. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you stands to pray, he is conversing with his Lord, so let him pay attention to how he speaks to Him.»⁵⁷

8. Praying with a barrier (sutra) in front of you and praying close to it

Another thing that will help you to have khushoo‘ is making sure you have a *sutra*⁵⁸ and praying close to it, because this will restrict your field of vision, protect you from Satan and keep people from passing in front of you, which would otherwise cause a distraction and reduce the reward of the prayer. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you prays, let him pray facing a *sutra*, and let him get close to it.»⁵⁹

Getting close to the *sutra* is very beneficial, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you prays facing a *sutra*, let him get close to it so that Satan cannot interrupt his prayer.»⁶⁰ The Sunnah in getting close to the *sutra* is to have three cubits between where one stands and the spot where one prostrates, or to allow enough space for a sheep to pass between the two, as is reported in the authentic hadith.⁶¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) advised people not to allow anyone to pass between them and their *sutra* when they pray. He said:

⁵⁷ Al-Hâkim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 1, p. 236; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 1538

⁵⁸ *sutra*: a symbolic barrier placed in front of a praying person so that others do not pass directly in front of the worshiper

⁵⁹ Abu Dawood, hadith no. 695, vol. 1, p. 446; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 651

⁶⁰ *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 651

⁶¹ Bukhari; see *Fath al-Bâri*, vol.1, pp. 574 & 579

«When any one of you is praying, he should not allow anyone to pass in front of him, and he should prevent him as far as he can. If (the passerby) insists, (the worshipper) should fight him, for (the passerby) has a companion (that is, a devil) with him.»⁶²

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The wisdom in using a sutrah is to lower your gaze and not to look beyond it, and to prevent anyone from passing in front of you...and to prevent Satan from passing in front of you and trying to corrupt your prayer.⁶³

9. Placing your right hand on your left hand on your chest

The Prophet (ﷺ), when he stood up to pray, used to place his right hand on his left hand,⁶⁴ and place them on his chest.⁶⁵ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «We Prophets were commanded ...to place our right hands on our left hands in prayer.»⁶⁶

Imam Aḥmad (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the meaning of placing one hand on top of the other when standing in prayer. He said, “It is humility before the Almighty.”⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Scholars have said that the significance of this posture is that it is the attitude of the humble petitioner, it is more likely to

⁶² Reported by Muslim, vol. 1, p. 260; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 755

⁶³ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 216

⁶⁴ Muslim, hadith no. 401

⁶⁵ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 759; see also *Irwâ' al-Ghaleel*, vol 2, p. 71

⁶⁶ Reported by Aṭ-Ṭabarâni in *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabeer*, hadith no. 11485; Al-Haythami said, “Aṭ-Ṭabarâni reported it in *Al-Awsaṭ*, and its narrators are sound.” *Al-Majma'*, vol. 3, p. 155

⁶⁷ *Al-Khushoo' fiṣ-Ṣalâh* by Ibn Rajab, p. 21

prevent fidgeting, and it is more conducive to khushoo‘.⁶⁸

10. Looking at the place of prostration

‘A’ishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated: «The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to pray with his head tilted forward and his gaze lowered, looking at the ground.»⁶⁹

When the Prophet (ﷺ) entered the Ka‘bah, his eyes never left the place of his prostration until he came out again.⁷⁰ When you sit to recite the *tashahhud*,⁷¹ you should look at the finger with which you are pointing as you move it, as it was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) would point with his right index finger towards the *qibla*,⁷² and focus his gaze upon it.⁷³ According to another report he pointed with his index finger and did not allow his gaze to wander beyond it.⁷⁴

The ruling on closing one’s eyes during prayer

What is the ruling on closing the eyes during prayer, especially when a person feels that this increases their khushoo‘?

⁶⁸ *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 2, p. 224

⁶⁹ Al-Ĥâkim, vol. 1, p. 479. He said it was sound according to the stipulations of Bukhari and Muslim, and Al-Albâni agreed with him in *Şifât aş-Şalâh*, p. 89

⁷⁰ Al-Ĥâkim in *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 1, p. 479. He said it was sound according to the stipulations of Bukhari and Muslim; Adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. Al-Albâni concurred in *Irwâ’ al-Ghaleel*, vol. 2, p. 73

⁷¹ *tashahhud*: the testimony that states that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, He has no partners, and that Muhammad (bpuh) is His Slave and His Messenger

⁷² *qibla* (*qiblah*): the bearing from the Ka‘bah to any point on Earth; the direction that all Muslims must face in prayer

⁷³ Reported by Ibn Khuzaymah, vol. 1, p. 355, hadith no. 719; according to the editor, its chain is sound. See *Şifât aş-Şalâh*, p. 139

⁷⁴ Aĥmad, vol. 4, p. 3, and by Abu Dâwood, no. 990

The answer is that this goes against the Sunnah that was reported from the Prophet (ﷺ) that was just referred to above. Closing the eyes means that a person misses out on the Sunnah of looking at the place of prostration and at his finger. But there is more to the matter than this, so we should listen to the opinion of an expert, Abu ‘Abdullâh ibn al-Qayyim, which will explain the matter further. He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not part of the Prophet’s teaching to close the eyes during prayer. We have already mentioned how he used to look at his finger during the tashahhud and the supplication, and he would not let his gaze wander beyond his finger...Another indication [that he kept his eyes open] is the fact that he stretched his hand forth to take the bunch of grapes when he saw paradise, and he also saw hell and the woman (who had tormented) the cat, and the owner of the shepherd’s crook. Likewise, he pushed away the animal that wanted to pass in from of him whilst he was praying, and he pushed back the boy, and the young girl, and the two young girls. He used to acknowledge those whom he saw greeting him (whilst he was praying). There is also a hadeeth that describes how Satan tried to tempt him whilst he was praying, so he grabbed him and strangled him, for he had seen him with his own eyes. From these hadiths and others we learn that he did not close his eyes when he prayed.

Scholars of jurisprudence differ as to whether closing one’s eyes during prayer is disliked. Imam Aḥmad and others did count it as disliked, remarking, “This is what the Jews do,” but others allowed it and did not count it as something that was disliked. The correct view is that if keeping the eyes open does not affect a person’s khushoo‘, then this is better, but if keeping the eyes open affects a person’s khushoo because of

decorations, adornments and so forth in front of him which distract him, then it is not disliked at all for him to close his eyes. The opinion that indeed it is preferred in this case is closer to the principles and aims of sharia⁷⁵ than saying it is disliked. And Allah knows best.⁷⁶

Thus it is clear that the Sunnah is not to close one's eyes, unless it is necessary to do so in order to avoid something that may adversely affect one's khushoo'.

11. Raising your right index finger

This is something which is neglected by many worshippers because they are ignorant of its great benefits and its effect on khushoo'. The Prophet (ﷺ) said about raising the right index finger: «It is more powerful against Satan than iron.»⁷⁷

Pointing with the forefinger during the tashahhud is more painful to the devil than being beaten with a rod of iron, because it reminds worshippers of the Unity of Allah and to be sincere in their worship of Him alone, and this is what Satan hates most; we seek refuge with Allah from him.⁷⁸

Because of this great benefit, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, used to enjoin one another to do this and were very keen to remember to do this thing which so many people nowadays take so lightly. It was reported that the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) used to enjoin one another with regard to pointing with the finger during the invocation.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *sharia (shari'ah)*: Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah

⁷⁶ *Zâd al-Ma'âd*, vol.1, p. 293, *Dâr ar-Risâlah*

⁷⁷ Aḥmad, vol. 2, p. 119, with a reliable chain, as stated in *Şifât aş-Şalâh*, p. 159

⁷⁸ *Al-Fatḥ ar-Rabbâni* by As-Sa'di, vol. 4, p. 15

⁷⁹ Ibn Abi Shaybah reported this with a reliable chain, as stated in *Şifât aş-*

The Sunnah in pointing with the forefinger is that it should remain raised and moving, pointing towards the qibla, throughout the tashahhud.

12. Varying what is recited in prayer

This makes you feel that you are encountering new meanings and moving between different topics mentioned in the verses and phrases of remembrance. This is what a person misses out on if he or she only memorizes a few chapters of the Qur'an (especially just the short ones) and phrases of remembrance. Varying what one recites is the Sunnah and is more conducive to khushoo'.

If we study what the Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite in his prayer, we will see this variation. For example, with regard to the opening supplication, we find examples such as the following:

"O Allah, separate me (far) from my sins as You have separated the East from the West. O Allah, cleanse me of my sins as white cloth is cleansed from dirt. O Allah, wash me of my sins with water, snow and ice." [*Allâhumma bâ'id bayni wa bayna khatâyâya kamâ bâ'adta bayn al-mashriqi wal-maghrib. Allâhumma naqqinee min khatâyâya kamâ yunaqqâ ath-thawb al-abyaḍ min ad-danas. Allâhumma igh-silnee min khatâyâya bil-mâ'i wath-thalji wal-barad.*]

"I have set my face towards the Originator of the heavens and the earth sincerely, and I am not one of the polytheists. Indeed my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds: no partner has He. With this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims (those who submit

=*Ṣalâh*, p. 141. See *Al-Muṣannaf*, hadith no. 9732, vol. 10, p. 381, Dar al-Salafiya, India

to Him).” [*Wajahtu wajhi lilladhi faṭara as-samawâti wal-arḍ ḥaneefan, wa mâ ana min al-mushrikeen. Inna ṣalâtee wa nusukee wa maḥyâya wa mamâtee lillâhi Rabb al-‘âlameen, lâ shareeka lahu wa bi dhâlîka umirtu wa ana awwal al-muslimeen.*]

“Glory and praise be to You, O Allah, blessed be Your name and exalted be Your majesty. There is none worthy of worship other than You.” [*Subḥânak Allâhumma wa bi ḥamdika wa tabâraka ismuka wa ta‘âlâ jadduka wa lâ ilâha ghayruk.*]

There are many other supplications and phrases of remembrance which the worshipper can use at various times.⁸⁰

Among the chapters which the Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite during the dawn prayer, we find a great and blessed number:

The most well known are the longer chapters from the last seventh of the Qur’an, such as *Al-Wâqi’ah* (56), *Aṭ-Ṭoor* (52) and *Qâf* (50), and certain shorter chapters such as *At-Takweer* (81), *Az-Zalzalah* (99), and the last two chapters of the Qur’an: *Al-Falaq* (113) and *An-Nâs* (114).

It was reported that he (ﷺ) recited *Ar-Room* (30), *Yâ-Seen* (36) and *Aṣ-Ṣâffât* (37), and on Fridays he would recite *As-Sajdah* (32) and *Al-Insân* (76), also known as *Ad-Dahr*, in the dawn prayer.

It was reported that in the midday prayer, he (ﷺ) would recite the equivalent of thirty verses in each of the first two units, and that he recited *Aṭ-Ṭâriq* (86), *Al-Burooj* (85) and *Al-Layl* (92).

In the mid-afternoon prayer, he (ﷺ) would recite the equivalent of fifteen verses in each of the first two units, and he would recite the chapters already mentioned in connection with the midday prayer.

⁸⁰ These authentic supplications and others can be found in books like *Al-Qaḥṭânî’s Fortification of the Muslim*, Cairo: Dar al-Salam 2004. (Editor)

In the sunset prayer, he (ﷺ) would recite short chapters such as *At-Teen* (95), and he recited longer chapters such as *Soorat Muhammad* (47), *Aṭ-Ṭoor* (52), *Al-Mursalât* (77) and others.

In the evening prayer he (ﷺ) would recite medium-length chapters from the last thirtieth of the Qur'an, such as *Ash-Shams* (91) and *Al-Inshiqâq* (84). He told Mu'âdh to recite *Al-A'îlâ* (87), *Al-Qalam* (68) and *Al-Layl* (92).

During qiyâm al-layl or tahajjud, he (ﷺ) used to recite the long soorât. It was reported that he used to recite 150 to 200 verses, but sometimes he used to shorten the recitation.

He (ﷺ) used to vary the phrases of remembrance he recited in rukoo'. In addition to "Glory be to my Supreme Lord" [*Subhâna Rabbee al-'Adheem*] and "Glory and praise be to my Supreme Lord" [*Subhâna Rabbee al-'Adheem wa bi ḥamdih*], he would say, "Perfect, Blessed, Lord of the angels and the spirit" [*Subbooh, Quddoos, Rabb al-malâ'ikati war-rooh*] or "O Allah, to You I have bowed, in You I have believed, to You I have submitted and in You I have put my trust. You are my Lord. Humbled are my hearing, my sight, my blood, my flesh, my bones and my nerves for Allah, Lord of the Worlds" [*Allâhumma laka raka'tu wa bika âmantu wa laka aslamtu wa 'alayka tawakkaltu. Anta Rabbee. Khasha'a sam'ee wa baṣaree wa dammee wa laḥmee wa 'adhmeem wa 'aṣabee lillâhi Rabb al-'Âlameen*].

When standing upright from rukoo', after saying "Allah listens to the one who praises Him" [*Sami'a Allâhu li man ḥamidah*] he (ﷺ) would say, "Our Lord, and to You be all praise" [*Rabbanâ wa laka al-ḥamd*] or sometimes, "Our Lord, to You be all praise" [*Rabbanâ laka al-ḥamd*] or, "O Allah our Lord, (and) to You be all praise." [*Allâhumma Rabbanâ (wa) laka al-ḥamd*]. Sometimes he would add the words, "(Praise) filling the heavens,

filling the earth, and filling whatever else You wish” [*Mil’a as-samawâti wa mil’a al-arḍ wa mil’a mâ shi’ta min shay’in ba’d*], and sometimes he would add, “Lord of Glory and Majesty! None can withhold what You grant, and none can grant what You withhold; nor can the possessions of an owner benefit him in front of You” [*Ahl ath-thanâ’i wal-majd, lâ mâni’a li mâ a’tayta wa lâ mu’tiya li mâ mana’t, wa lâ yanfa’u dha al-jaddi minka al-jadd*].

In prostration, in addition to “Glory be to my Lord Most High” [*Subhâna Rabbee al-A’lâ*] and “Glory and praise be to my Lord Most High” [*Subhâna Rabbee al-A’lâ wa bi ḥamdih*], he (ﷺ) would say, “Perfect, Blessed, Lord of the Angels and the Spirit” [*Subboḥ, Quddoos, Rabb il-Malâ’ikati war-Rooḥ*] or “Glory and praise be to you O Allah, our Lord, O Allah forgive me” [*Subhânak Allâhumma Rabbanâ wa bi ḥamdik, Allâhumma igh-firlee*] or “O Allah, to You I have prostrated, in You I have believed and to You I have submitted. My face has prostrated to the One Who created it and gave it shape, then brought forth its hearing and its sight. Blessed be Allah, the perfect Creator” [*Allâhumma laka sajadtu wa bika âmantu wa laka aslamtu; sajada wajhee lilladhi khalaqahu wa sawwarahu wa shaqqa sam’ahu wa baṣarahu, tabâarak Allâhu aḥsan al-khâliqeen*], and other supplications.

When sitting between the two prostrations, in addition to “Lord, forgive me, Lord, forgive me” [*Rabbi ighfir lee, Rabbi ighfir lee*], he (ﷺ) would say, “O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, strengthen me, raise my rank, guide me, pardon me, sustain me” [*Allâhumma ighfir lee warḥamnee wajburnee wa arfa’nee wahdinee wa âfinee warzuqnee*].

A number of versions of the tashahhud have been narrated, such as: “All compliments, prayers and pure words are due to Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet...” [*At-taḥiyyâtu lillâhi waṣ-*

şalawâtu waṭ-ṭayyibât, as-salâmu ‘alayka ayyuha an-nabiyyu...] and “All compliments, blessed words, prayers, pure words are due to Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet...” [At-Taḥiyyât *al-mubâarakât waş-şalawât aṭ-ṭayyibâtu lillâhi, as-salâmu ‘alayka ayyuha an-nabiyyu...*] and “All compliments, good words and prayers are due to Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet...” [At-taḥiyyât *aṭ-ṭayyibât aş-şalawâtu lillâhi, as-salâmu ‘alayka ayyuha an-nabiyyu...*]

As all of these are authentic phrases of remembrance and supplication, the worshipper may use one form one time and another at another time.

There are several versions of the prayers by which we ask Allah to bless the Prophet (ﷺ), such as:

“O Allah, send prayers on Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent prayers on Ibrâheem and the family of Ibrâheem, verily You are Worthy of Praise and Full of Glory; O Allah, send blessings on Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent blessings on Ibrâheem and the family of Ibrâheem, verily You are Worthy of Praise and Full of Glory [Allâhumma ṣalli ‘alâ Muḥammadin wa ‘alâ âli Muḥammadin kamâ ṣalayta ‘ala Ibrâheem wa ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem, innaka Ḥameedun, Majeed. Allâhumma bârik ‘alâ Muḥammadin wa ‘alâ âli Muḥammadin kamâ bârakta ‘alâ Ibrâheem wa ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem innaka Ḥameedun, Majeed].

Or,

“O Allah, send prayers on Muhammad and on his family, wives and progeny, as You sent prayers on the family of Ibrâheem, verily You are Worthy of Praise and Full of Glory; O Allah, send blessings on Muhammad and on his family, wives and progeny, as You sent blessings on the family of Ibrâheem, verily You are Worthy of Praise and Full of Glory” [Allâhumma ṣalli ‘alâ

Muḥammad wa ‘alâ âli baytihi wa ‘alâ azwâjîhi wa dhuriyyatihi kamâ ṣalayta ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem, innaka Ḥameedun, Majeed; wa bârik ‘alâ Muḥammadin wa ‘alâ âli baytihi wa ‘alâ azwâjîhi wa dhuriyyatihi kamâ bârakta ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem innaka Ḥameedun, Majeed].

Or,

“O Allah, send prayers on Muhammad the Unlettered Prophet and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent prayers on the family of Ibrâheem, and send blessings on Muhammad the Unlettered Prophet and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent blessings on the family of Ibrâheem among the nations, verily You are Worthy of Praise and Full of Glory” [*Allâhumma ṣalli ‘alâ Muḥammad an-Nabiy al-Ummiy wa ‘alâ âli Muḥammad kamâ ṣalayta ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem, wa bârik ‘alâ Muḥammad an-Nabiy al-Ummiy wa ‘alâ âli Muḥammadin kamâ bârakta ‘alâ âli Ibrâheem fil-‘âlameen, innaka Ḥameedun, Majeed*].

Other similar versions have also been narrated, and the Sunnah is to vary your prayer using them, as stated above. There is nothing wrong with reciting one version more than others, when a version is more strongly proven and better known in the collections of authentic hadiths, or because the Prophet (ﷺ) taught one version rather than others to his Companions when they asked him about it, or for similar sound reasons.⁸¹

⁸¹ All of the above texts have been taken from *Şifat Ṣalât an-Nabi (bpuh)* by Shaykh Muhammad Nâşiruddeen al-Albâni, which he compiled from books of hadith. (Translator) The reader is encouraged to find these same authentic phrases of remembrance and supplication in books such as those of Sa‘eed al-Qaḥṭâni, already mentioned. (Editor)

13. Performing prostrations of recital when they are required

One etiquette of reciting the Qur'an is to perform *sujood at-tilâwah*⁸² when one recites a verse containing mention of prostration to Allah, upon which prostration by the recite and those who hear it is required. In His Book, Allah (ﷻ) describes the Prophets and the righteous as follows:

﴿... إِذَا نُنَالِي عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ۝٥٨﴾ (سورة مريم : ٥٨)

﴿...When the verses of the Most Beneficent were recited unto them, they fell down prostrating and weeping.﴾ (Qur'an 19: 58)

In his famous tafseer, Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) commented, "The scholars agree that we should prostrate here (when reciting this verse or any other verse of prostration) so as to follow their example."⁸³

Sujood at-tilâwah in prayer is very important because it increases khushoo'. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَيَخْرُونَ لِلْآذَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا ۝١٠٩﴾ (سورة الإسراء : ١٠٩)

﴿And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility [khushoo'].﴾ (Qur'an 17: 109)

It was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) prostrated when he recited *Soorat an-Najm* (53) in his prayer. Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) reported in his *Shaheeh* that Abu Râfi' said, "I prayed 'ishâ'⁸⁴ with Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) and he recited *Idhâ as-samâ'u inshaqqat* (*Al-Inshiqâq* 84) and prostrated. I asked him

⁸² prostrations of recital of a verse

⁸³ *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-Adheem*, vol. 5, p. 238, Dâr ash-Sha'b

⁸⁴ 'ishâ': the obligatory evening prayer

about it, and he said, 'I prostrated behind Abul-Qâsim (the Prophet), and I will continue to do so until I meet him again.'⁸⁵

It is important to maintain the practice of prostrating upon reciting these special verses, especially since it causes annoyance to the devil and suppresses him, thus weakening his hold on the worshipper. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «When the son of Adam recites a verse of prostration, Satan goes away weeping, saying: Woe to him! He was commanded to prostrate and he prostrated, so paradise is his; I was ordered to prostrate and I disobeyed, so Hell is my fate!»⁸⁶

14. Seeking refuge with Allah from Satan

Satan is our enemy, and one of the aspects of his enmity is his whispering insinuating thoughts to you as a worshipper at prayer so as to take away your khushoo' and confuse you in your prayer.

Waswâs is a problem that befalls everyone who turns to Allah with remembrance of Him and other kinds of worship; waswâs is inevitable, so you have to stand firm and be patient, and persist in your remembrance of Allah or your ṣalâh, and not give up. Sticking to it will ward off the devil's plots from yourself.

(سورة التيساء : ٧٦)

﴿...إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا﴾ (٧٦)

﴿... Ever feeble indeed is the plot of Satan.﴾ (Qur'an 4: 76)

Every time you — the believing slave — want to turn your thoughts towards Allah, thoughts of other matters come sneaking into your mind. The devil is like a bandit lying in wait to launch an ambush: every time you want to travel towards Allah, Satan wants

⁸⁵ *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhâri*, 'The Book of the Adhân'

⁸⁶ Muslim, hadith no. 133

to cut off your route. For this reason, when it was said to one of the pious predecessors, “The Jews and Christians say that they do not suffer from the problem of waswâs,” he replied, “They are speaking the truth, for what would Satan want with a house that is in ruins?”⁸⁷

This is a good analogy. It is as if there are three houses: the house of a king, filled with his treasure and savings, the house of a slave, containing his treasure and savings, and an empty house with nothing in it. If a thief comes to steal from one of the three houses, which one will he choose?⁸⁸

When you stand up to pray, the devil feels jealous of you, because you are standing in the greatest position, one that is closest (to Allah) and most annoying and grievous to Satan. So he tries to stop you from establishing prayer in the first place, then he continues trying to entice you and to make you forget, as Allah describes Satan’s actions,

﴿... وَأَجْلَبَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِحِيلِكَ وَرَجَلَ﴾ ... ﴿سورة الإسراء: ٦٤﴾

﴿...and assault them with your cavalry and infantry...﴾ (Qur'an 17: 64)

— until you think of prayer as less important, so you start to neglect it, and eventually give it up altogether. If Satan fails to achieve this, and you ignore him and start to pray, the enemy of Allah will come and try to distract you, by reminding you of things that you did not remember or think of before you started praying. You may have forgotten about something altogether, but the devil will remind you of it when you start praying, so as to distract you from your prayers and take you away from Allah, so that your heart will no longer be in your prayers, and you will lose

⁸⁷ *Majmoo' al-Fatâwâ*, by Ibn Taymiyah, vol. 22, p. 608

⁸⁸ *Al-Wâbil as-Şayyib*, by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, p. 43

out on the honour and reward of Allah turning toward you, which is only attained by the one when your heart is really in your prayer. Thus you will finish your prayer no better off than when you started, with your burden of sins not reduced at all by your ṣalâh, because prayer only expiates for sins when it is done properly, with perfect khushoo‘, and you stand before Allah in body, mind and soul.⁸⁹

The Prophet (ﷺ) taught us the following methods of combatting the wiles of Satan and getting rid of his evil whispering: «Abu’l-‘Âṣ (رضي الله عنه) reported that he said: O Messenger of Allah, Satan interrupts me when I pray, and I get confused in my recitation. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: That is a devil whose name is Khanzab. If you sense his presence, seek refuge with Allah from him, and spit (symbolically, without spittle) towards your left three times. (Abu’l-‘Âṣ) said: I did that and Allah took him (that devil) away from me.»⁹⁰

The Prophet (ﷺ) also told us about another of the devil’s tricks and how to deal with it. He (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you gets up to pray, Satan comes and confuses him (that is, he mixes up his prayer and creates doubts in his mind) so that he does not know how many (units) he has prayed. If any one of you experiences that, he should do two prostrations whilst he is sitting.»⁹¹

Another of Satan’s tricks was described as follows. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If any one of you is praying and feels some movement in his back passage, and is uncertain as to whether he has nullified his ablution or not, he should not end his prayer unless he hears a

⁸⁹ *Al-Wâbil aṣ-Ṣayyib*, p. 36

⁹⁰ Muslim, hadith no. 2203

⁹¹ Bukhari

sound or smells an odour.» Indeed, his tricks may be very strange indeed, as the following hadith makes clear. Ibn ‘Abbâs reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about a man who thought that he had nullified his ablution when he had not done so. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The devil may come to one of you when he is praying and open his buttocks and make him think that he has nullified his ablution when in fact he has not. So if this happens to him, he should not end his prayer unless he hears the sound of it with his ears or smells the odour of it with his nose.»⁹²

Another of Satan’s tricks

There is a devilish trick which ‘Khanzab’ plays on some worshippers:

He tries to distract them by making them think of acts of worship other than the prayer that they are performing, by making them think of some issues of *da‘wah*⁹³ or knowledge, so that they start to think deeply about those matters and stop focusing on the prayer they are performing. He even confuses some of them by suggesting to them that ‘Umar used to make plans for the army whilst he was praying. We should let Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah explain this matter and set the record straight:

With regard to what was reported, that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb said, “I make plans for the army whilst I am praying,” this was because ‘Umar was commanded to engage in jihad and he was the Leader of the Believers (the caliph), so he was also the leader of jihad. So in some respects he was like the one

⁹² Reported by Aṭ-Ṭabarâni in *Al-Majma‘ al-Kabeer*, vol. 11, p. 222 (hadith no. 11556); he said in *Majma‘ az-Zawâ'id*, vol. 1, p. 242, that its narrators were sound.

⁹³ *da‘wah*: disseminating the teachings of Islam and calling people to accept and embrace Islam

who prays the fear prayer (*salât al-khawf*) whilst also watching out for the enemy, whether or not there is actual fighting. He was commanded to pray, and also to engage in jihad, so he had to carry out both duties as much as he could.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾
(سورة الأنفال: ٤٥)

«O you who believe! When you meet [an enemy] force, take a firm stand against them and remember the Name of Allah much, so that you may be successful.» (Qur'an 8: 45)

It is known that one cannot achieve the same peace of mind during jihad as at times of peace and security, so if it happens that a person's prayer is lacking because of jihad, this does not mean that his faith is lacking. For this reason, standards may be regarded as being slightly relaxed in the case of prayer at times of danger as compared with times of peace.

With regard to prayer at times of danger, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿... فَإِذَا أَطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا﴾
(سورة النساء: ١٠٣)

«...but when you are free from danger, perform the prayer. Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours.» (Qur'an 4: 103)

Thus, the one who is commanded to establish prayer at times of peace is not commanded to do so in the same manner at times of danger.

Moreover, people are of varying levels in this regard. If a person's faith is strong, he will have the proper presence of mind when he prays, even if he thinks of other matters. Allah had caused the truth to reside firmly in 'Umar's heart, and he

was known as ‘the inspired speaker’, so there is nothing strange in a person of his calibre making plans for the army whilst performing the prayer. He was able to do this, whilst others are not, but undoubtedly when he did not have these concerns to think about, his presence of mind in prayer would be greater. And no doubt the prayer of the Prophet (ﷺ) at times of safety was even more perfect than at times of danger, in terms of external appearance. If Allah has made allowances with regard to some of the external movements of the prayer at times of fear, what, then, about the internal aspects?

In conclusion, therefore, if a person who is pressed for time thinks about some obligatory matter whilst he or she is praying, this is not the same as a person who is not pressed for time thinking during prayer about some matter that is not obligatory. It may be that ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) could not give thought to making plans for the army except at that time because he was the leader of the Ummah, with many obligations and responsibilities. Anyone in his position could find himself in a similar situation. People always think during prayer about things that they do not think of at other times, and some of this could come from Satan. A man told one of the pious predecessors that he had buried some money, but he had forgotten where he had buried it. He told the man, ‘Go and pray,’ so he went and prayed, and he remembered where it was. It was said (to the pious predecessor), ‘How did you know that would happen?’ He said, ‘I know that Satan will not leave him alone when he prays without reminding him of something that matters to him, and there is nothing more important to this man than remembering where he had buried this money.’ But the good slave will strive to attain perfect presence of mind in prayer just as he strives to do everything else properly that he is commanded to do. And there is no

help and no strength except in Allah, the Most High, the Almighty.

15. Thinking of how the pious predecessors were when they prayed

This will increase your *khushoo'* and motivate you to follow their example.

If you were to see one of them when he stood up to pray and started reciting the words of his Master, it would cross his mind that he was standing before the Lord of the Worlds, so he would be filled with overwhelming awe.⁹⁴

Mujâhid (رضي الله عنه) said:

When one of them stood in prayer, he would be too fearful of his Lord to allow his eyes to be drawn to anything, or to turn aside or to fidget by playing with pebbles or anything else or to think of any worldly matter, unless he forgot, during prayer.⁹⁵

When Ibn az-Zubayr stood up to pray, he would be like a post (immobile) with humility and devotion. Once, when Makkah was being besieged, he was prostrating when a missile from a catapult was launched at him; part of his garment was torn away whilst he was praying, and he did not even raise his head. Muslimah ibn Bash-shâr was praying in the mosque when part of it collapsed, and everyone got up (and fled), but he was praying and did not even notice. I have heard that one of these pious predecessors was like a garment thrown on the floor when he prayed, and another would end his prayer with the colour of his

⁹⁴ *Al-Khushoo' fiṣ-Ṣalâh* by Ibn Rajab, p. 22

⁹⁵ *Ta'dheem Qadr aṣ-Ṣalâh*, vol 1, p. 188

complexion changed because he had been standing before Allah. Another of them would not know who was standing to his right or left when he prayed. Yet another of them would go pale when he performed ablution for the prayer, and it was said to him, "We see that when you perform ablution a change comes over you." He said, "I know before Whom I am going to stand." When the time for prayer came, 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭâlib (عليه السلام) would be visibly shaken, and the colour of his face would change. It was said to him, "What is the matter with you?" He said, "By Allah, there has come the time of the trust which Allah offered to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it, but I bore it."⁹⁶

When Sa'eed at-Tanookhi prayed, there would be tears rolling down his cheeks onto his beard. We heard that one of the *tâbi'een*⁹⁷ when he stood up to pray, his colour would change, and he would say, "Do you know before Whom I am going to stand and with Whom I am going to talk?"⁹⁸ Who among us has fear and respect like this?

They asked 'Ameer ibn 'Abdul Qays, "Do you think to yourself during prayer?" He replied, "Is there anything I like to think about more than the prayer?" They said, "We think to ourselves during prayer." He inquired, "About paradise and its beautiful maidens and so on?" They said, "No, about our families and our wealth." He said, "If I were to be run through with spears, it would be dearer to me than thinking to myself about worldly matters during prayer."

⁹⁶ He was referring to the meaning of verse 72 in Soorat al-Aḥzâb (Qur'an 33: 72).

⁹⁷ *tâbi'oon* or *tâbi'een* (sg. *tâbi'ee*): those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them

⁹⁸ *Silâḥ al-Yaqdhân li Ṭard ash-Shayṭân*, by 'Abdul-'Azeez Sulṭân, p. 209

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh said,

I have three qualities, which I wish I could keep up all the time, then I would really be something. When I am praying, I do not think about anything except the prayer I am doing; if I hear any hadith from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), I do not have any doubts about it; and when I attend a funeral, I do not think about anything except what the corpse says and what is said to it.⁹⁹

Ḥâtim (رضي الله عنه) said:

I carry out what I am commanded; I walk with fear of Allah in my heart; I start with the (correct) intention; I magnify and glorify Allah ; I recite at a slow and measured pace, thinking about the meaning; I bow with khushoo'; I prostrate with humility; I sit and recite the complete tashahhud; I say *salâm* with the (correct) intention; I finish with sincerity towards Allah ; and I come back fearing lest (my prayer) has not been accepted from me, so I continue to strive until I die.¹⁰⁰

Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣubghī said:

I lived through the time of two Imâms (leaders) although I was not fortunate enough to hear them in person. Abu Ḥâtim ar-Râzi and Muhammad ibn Naṣr, I do not know of any prayer better than his. I heard that a hornet stung him on his forehead and blood started flowing down his face, but he did not move.

Muhammad Ibn Ya'qoob al-Akhram said:

I have never seen any prayer better than that of Muhammad ibn Naṣr. Flies used to land on his ears, and he did not send

⁹⁹ *Al-Fatâwâ al-Kubrâ*, by Ibn Taymiyah, vol. 22, p. 605

¹⁰⁰ *Al-khushoo' fiṣ-Ṣalâh*, pp. 27-28

them away. We used to marvel at how good his prayer and khushoo' were. His fear (of Allah) in prayer was so great that he would put his chin on his chest as if he were a piece of wood standing upright.¹⁰¹

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him), when he started to pray, used to tremble so much that he would lean right and left.¹⁰²

Compare this with what some of us do nowadays, looking at our watches, fiddling with our clothes, rubbing our noses, thinking of deals and counting our money in our heads, tracing the patterns of decorations on carpets and ceilings, or trying to see who is beside us. Think of how anyone would behave before some great leader of this world — would we dare to behave in such a manner then?

16. Knowing the advantages of humility and devotion in prayer

The advantages of khushoo' in prayer are great:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Any Muslim who, when the time for a prescribed prayer comes, performs *wuḍoo'*,¹⁰³ properly, has the proper attitude of humility and devotion, and bows properly, it will be an expiation for all his previous sins, so long as they were not major sins. And this is the case throughout life.»¹⁰⁴

The rewards recorded are in proportion to the degree of khushoo', as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A slave may pray and have

¹⁰¹ *Ta'dheem Qadr aṣ-Ṣalâh*, vol. 1, p. 58

¹⁰² *Al-Kawâkib ad-Durriyah fee Manâqib al-Mujtahid Ibn Taymiyah*, by Mar'i al-Karâmi, Dâr al-Gharb al-Islami, p. 83

¹⁰³ *wuḍoo'*: ablution required before prayer or touching the Qur'an

¹⁰⁴ Muslim, vol. 1., p. 206

nothing recorded for it except a tenth of it, or a ninth, or an eighth, or a seventh, or a sixth, or a fifth, or a quarter, or a third, or a half.»¹⁰⁵

Only the part of your prayer where you focus and concentrate properly will be of any avail to you. It was reported that Ibn ‘Abbâs (رضي الله عنه) said: “You will only have from your prayer that which you focused on.”

Sins will be forgiven if you concentrate properly and have full humility and devotion, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When a slave stands and prays, all his sins are brought and placed on his head and shoulders. Every time he bows or prostrates, some of them fall from him.»¹⁰⁶

Al-Manâwi explained:

What is meant is that every time a pillar (an essential part) of the prayer is completed, part of his sins fall from him, so that by the time he finishes his prayer, all his sins will have been removed. This is in a prayer where all the conditions are met and the essential parts are complete. What we understand from the words ‘slave’ and ‘stands’ is that he is standing before the King of kings (Allah) in the position of a humble slave.¹⁰⁷

If you pray with humility and devotion, you will feel lighter when you finish your prayer, as if your burdens have been lifted from you. You will feel at ease and refreshed, so that you will wish you had not stopped praying, because it is such a source of joy and comfort for you in this world. You will feel that you are in

¹⁰⁵ Aḥmad; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi’*, hadith no. 1626

¹⁰⁶ Al-Bayhaqi in *As-Sunan al-Kubrâ*, vol. 3, p. 10; see also *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi’*

¹⁰⁷ Al-Bayhaqi, op. cit.

a constricting prison until you start to pray again; you will find comfort in prayer instead of wanting just to get it over and done with. Those who love prayer say, “We pray and find comfort in our prayer,” just as their leader and example, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «O Bilâl, let us find comfort in prayer.» He did not say, “Let us get it over and done with.” The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «My joy has been made in prayer.» So whoever finds his joy in prayer, how can he bear to look for joy anywhere else, or to keep away from it?¹⁰⁸

17. Striving to offer supplication at the appropriate times during the prayer, especially in prostration

There is no doubt that talking to Allah, humbling oneself before Him, asking favours from Him and earnestly seeking His help, all help to strengthen the slave’s ties to his Lord and increase his humility and devotion. Supplication is an act of worship, and we are commanded to supplicate and to invoke Allah. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿... نَدْعُوهُ نَضْرَعًا وَخَفِيَةً ...﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٦٣)

﴿... call upon Him in humility and in secret...﴾ (Qur’an 6: 63)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever does not call on Allah, Allah will be angry with him.»¹⁰⁹

It was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate at specific places in the prayer: in prostration; between the two prostrations; and after the tashahhud. The longest of these was during prostration, because the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The closest

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Wâbil aṣ-Ṣayib*, p. 37

¹⁰⁹ At-Tirmidhi, *Kitâb ad-Da‘wât*, vol. 1, p. 426; classed as reliable in *Ṣaḥeeḥ at-Tirmidhi*, hadith no. 2686

that the slave can be to his Lord is when he is prostrating, so increase your supplication (at that time).»¹¹⁰

He (ﷺ) also said: «...As for prostration, strive hard to supplicate in it, for it is bound to be answered for you.»¹¹¹

One of the supplications which the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say in his prostration was: «O Allah, forgive me my sins, the minor and the major, the first and the last, the open and the hidden [*Allâhumma ighfir lee dhanbee diqqahu wa jillahu wa awwalahu wa âkhirahu wa 'alâniyatahu wa sirrahu.*]»¹¹² He (ﷺ) also used to say: «O Allah, forgive me for what I have done in secret and done openly [*Allâhumma ighfir lee mâ asrartu wa mâ a'lantu.*]»¹¹³ We have already described some of the supplications that he used to recite between the two prostrations. (See section 11)

One of the supplications that he (ﷺ) used to recite after the tashahhud is what we learn from the hadith: «When any one of you finishes the tashahhud let him seek refuge with Allah from four things: from the punishment of hell; from the punishment of the grave; from the trials of life and death; and from the evil of the *Dajjâl*.»¹¹⁴ He (ﷺ) used to say: «O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the evil of what I have done and the evil of what I have not done [*Allâhumma inni a'oodhu bika min sharri mâ 'amiltu wa min sharri mâ lan a'mal.*]» and «O Allah, make my accounting easy [*Allâhumma hâsibni hîsâban yaseeran.*]»

He taught Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) to say: «O Allah, I have wronged myself greatly, and no one can forgive sin but You. Grant me forgiveness from You and have mercy on me, for You are the All-

¹¹⁰ Muslim, *Kitâb aṣ-Ṣalâh*, hadith no. 215

¹¹¹ Muslim, *Kitâb aṣ-Ṣalâh*, hadith no. 207

¹¹² Muslim, *Kitâb aṣ-Ṣalâh*, hadith no. 216

¹¹³ *Al-Mujtabâ* by An-Nasâ'i, vol. 2, p. 569; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 1067

¹¹⁴ *Dajjâl*: Antichrist

Forgiving, All-Merciful [*Allâhumma innee dhalamtu nafsee dhulman katheeran, wa lâ yaghfir adh-dhunooba illâ anta, faghfir lee maghfiratan min 'indika warḥamnee innaka anta al-Ghafoor ar-Raḥeem.*]»

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) heard a man saying in his tashahhud: «O Allah, I ask You O Allah, the One, the Self-Sufficient Master, Who begets not nor is begotten, and there is none like unto Him, to forgive me my sins, for You are the All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. [*Allâhumma innee as'aluka yâ Allâh al-Aḥad aṣ-Ṣamad alladhee lam yalid wa lam yoolad wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad, an taghfir lee dhunoobi; innaka anta al-Ghafoor ar-Raḥeem.*] He (ﷺ) said to his Companions: He has been forgiven, he has been forgiven.»

He (ﷺ) heard another man saying: O Allah, I ask You as all praise is due to You, there is none worthy of worship other than You Alone, with no partner or associate, the Bestower, O Originator of the heavens and earth, O Possessor of Glory and Honour, O Ever-Living, O Self-Sustaining, I ask You for paradise and I seek refuge with You from Hell [*Allâhumma innee as'aluka bi-anna laka al-ḥamd, lâ ilâha illâ anta, yâ dhal-jalâli wal-ikrâm, yâ ḥayyu yâ qayyoom, innee as'aluka al-jannah wa a'oodhu bika min al-nâr.*] «The Prophet (ﷺ) asked his Companions: Do you know by what he asked Allah? They said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, he asked Allah by His greatest Name; when He is called by it, He responds, and if He is asked by it, He gives.»

The last thing he (ﷺ) would say between the tashahhud and the *tasleem*¹¹⁵ was: «O Allah, forgive me what I have done in the past, and what I will do in the future, and what I have concealed,

¹¹⁵ *tasleem*: the act of saying *as-salâmu 'alaykum wa rahmat Allâh* to end the prayer

and what I have done openly, and what I have exceeded in, whatever You know about more than I. You are the Bringer-Forward, and You are the Delayer, there is none worthy of worship other than You. [*Allâhumma ighfir lee mâ qaddamtu wa mâ akhkhartu wa mâ asrartu wa mâ a'lantu wa mâ asraftu wa mâ anta a'lam bihi minnee; anta al-muqaddim wa anta al-mu'akhkhir, lâ ilâha illâ anta*].»¹¹⁶

Memorizing supplications like these will solve the problem that some people have of remaining silent behind the imam when they have finished the tashahhud because they do not know what they should say.

18. Remembrance of Allah after the prayer

These also help to strengthen khushoo' in the heart and reinforce the blessings and benefits of the prayer. Without a doubt, one of the best ways of preserving and protecting a good action is to follow it up with another. So the one who thinks about the phrases of remembrance that come after the prayer will find that they begin with seeking forgiveness three times, as if the worshipper is seeking forgiveness from his or her Lord for any shortcomings that may have occurred in their prayer or their khushoo'. It is also important to pay attention to the non-obligatory additional prayers, because they make up for anything lacking in the obligatory prayers, including any failure with regard to your humility and devotion.

* * *

Having discussed things that help us to have humility and devotion, we now move on to a discussion of warding off distractions and things that adversely affect that khushoo'.

¹¹⁶ *Şifât aş-Şalâh* by Al-Albâni, 11th ed., p. 163

19. Removing anything that may distract the worshipper

Anas (رضي الله عنه) narrated: «‘Ā’ishah (رضي الله عنها) had a decorated, colourful curtain which she used to cover the side of her house. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to her: Take it away from me, because its decorations keep distracting me when I pray.»¹¹⁷

Al-Qâsim reported that ‘Ā’ishah (رضي الله عنها) had a cloth with decorations on it, which she used as a curtain to cover a small alcove (used for sleeping or storage). The Prophet (ﷺ) used to have to pray facing it, and he (ﷺ) said: «Take it away, because its decorations keep distracting me when I pray. So she took it away and made cushions out of it.»¹¹⁸

Another indication of the importance of removing distracting objects is the fact that when the Prophet (ﷺ) entered the Ka‘bah to pray in it, he saw two ram’s horns. After he had prayed, he told ‘Uthmân al-Ḥajâbi: «I forgot to tell you to cover the horns, because there should not be anything in the House to distract the worshipper.»¹¹⁹

Avoiding anything distracting also means we should avoid praying in places that people pass through, or where there is a lot of noise, like people talking loudly, or where they are engaged in conversation, arguments, and so forth, or where there are visual distractions.

You should also avoid praying in places that are very hot or very cold, if possible. The Prophet (ﷺ) told us to delay performing the midday prayer in summer until the hottest part of the day was over. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) commented:

¹¹⁷ Bukhari, in *Fath al-Bâri* vol. 10, p. 391

¹¹⁸ Muslim in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ*, vol. 3, hadith no. 1668

¹¹⁹ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 2030; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi’*, hadith no. 2504

Praying when it is intensely hot prevents a person from having the proper humility, devotion and presence of mind, and he does his worship reluctantly, so the Prophet wisely told them to delay praying until the heat had lessened somewhat, so that they could pray with presence of mind and thus achieve the purpose of prayer, which is to have khushoo‘ and turn to Allah.¹²⁰

20. No prayer in a garment that distracts the worshipper

‘A’ishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated: «The Prophet (ﷺ) stood up to pray wearing a checkered shirt, and he noticed the patterns in it. When he had finished his prayer, he (ﷺ) said: Take this shirt to Abu Jaham ibn Ḥudhayfah and bring me a garment with no decorations or patterns, because it distracted me when I was praying.» According to another report: «These checks distracted me.» According to another report: «He (ﷺ) had a checkered shirt, which used to distract him whilst he was praying.»¹²¹

It is better not to pray in clothing that has images on it, and we should be especially careful to avoid clothing with pictures of animate beings, like many clothes that are widely available nowadays.

21. No prayer when the meal is ready to be eaten

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Do not pray when the meal is ready.»¹²² If food has been prepared and served, or if it is offered, a person should eat first, because he will not be able to

¹²⁰ *Al-Wâbil aṣ-Ṣayib*, Dâr al-Bayân, p. 22

¹²¹ *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 556, vol. 3, p. 391

¹²² *Muslim*, hadith no. 560

concentrate properly and have khushoo‘ if he leaves it and gets up to pray when he really wants to eat. He should not even hasten to finish eating, because the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If dinner is served and the time for prayer comes, eat dinner before praying *ṣalât al-maghrib*,¹²³ and do not rush to finish your meal.» According to another report, he (ﷺ) said: «If dinner has been served and the iqâmah has been called for the prayer, eat dinner first and do not rush to finish it.»¹²⁴

22. No prayer when you need to answer the call of nature

No doubt one of the things that can prevent proper humility and devotion is praying when one needs to go to the toilet. «The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade praying when one is suppressing the urge to urinate or defecate.»¹²⁵

If someone is in this situation, he or she should first go to the bathroom and answer the call of nature, even if he or she misses part of the congregational prayer, because the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If any one of you needs to go to the toilet, and the prayer has begun, he should go to the toilet first.»¹²⁶

If this happens to a person whilst he or she is praying, the worshipper should stop praying, go and answer the call of nature, renew the ablution, and then pray, because the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «There is no prayer when there is food prepared or if one is suppressing the urge to relieve oneself.»¹²⁷

¹²³ *ṣalât al-maghrib*: the prayer after sunset

¹²⁴ Bukhari and Muslim, hadith nos. 557-559

¹²⁵ Ibn Mâjah in his *Sunan*, hadith no. 617; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 6832

¹²⁶ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 88; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 299

¹²⁷ *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, hadith no. 560

Without a doubt, trying to suppress this physical urge takes away your khushoo'. This ruling also applies to suppressing the urge to pass wind.

23. No prayer when you feel sleepy

Anas ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If any one of you feels sleepy when he is praying, he should until he (is rested enough to) know what he is saying,»¹²⁸ meaning, he should take a nap until he no longer feels drowsy.

This may happen when you are praying qiyâm al-layl at the time when prayers are answered,¹²⁹ and you may supplicate against yourself without realizing it. The prayers referred to in this hadith also include obligatory prayers, as long as you are confident that you will still have enough time to pray after taking a nap.¹³⁰

24. No prayer facing someone who is talking (or sleeping)

The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade this; he (ﷺ) said: «Do not pray behind (or facing) one who is sleeping or one who is talking.»¹³¹ This is because someone who is talking will distract the worshipper with talk, and someone who is sleeping may expose something that will distract the worshipper.

Al-Khaṭṭâbi noted:

As for praying facing people who are talking, Ash-Shâfi'i and

¹²⁸ Bukhari, hadith no. 210

¹²⁹ Meaning, during the last third of the night (Editor)

¹³⁰ *Faṭḥ al-Bâri*, in the chapter on ablution

¹³¹ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 694; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 3750; this is a reliable hadith

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal considered this to be disliked because their talk distracts the worshipper from his prayer.¹³²

As regards not praying facing someone who is sleeping, a number of scholars thought that the evidence for this was weak.¹³³ Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him), quoted the hadith narrated by ‘Ā’ishah in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ*, in the section discussing this same issue: «The Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray whilst I was lying on his bed between him and his qibla.»¹³⁴

Mujâhid Ṭâwoos and Mâlik considered it detestable to pray facing someone who was sleeping, lest the sleeper expose something that would distract the worshipper from his prayer.¹³⁵ If there is no risk of that happening, then it is not disliked to pray facing someone who is sleeping, but Allah (ﷻ) knows best.

25. Not occupying yourself with smoothing the ground in front of you

Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) reported from Mu’ayqeeb (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said concerning a man who smoothed the ground when he prostrated: «If you have to do that, then do it only once.»¹³⁶ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Do not wipe (the ground) when you are praying, but if you have to, then do it only once.»¹³⁷

¹³² *Awn al-Ma’bood*, vol. 2, p. 388

¹³³ These include Abu Dâwood in his *Sunan*, in the section on supplications for witr prayer, and Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bâri*, in the section discussing prayer facing a sleeping person.

¹³⁴ Bukhari, hadith no. 494

¹³⁵ *Fath al-Bâri*, op. cit.

¹³⁶ *Fath al-Bâri*, op. cit.

¹³⁷ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 946; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi’*, hadith no. 7452

The reason for this prohibition is in order to maintain humility and devotion, and so that a person will not make too many extra movements in prayer. If the place where one is going to prostrate needs to be smoothed, it is better to do this before starting to pray.

This prohibition also applies to wiping the forehead or nose when praying. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to prostrate in water and mud, which would leave traces on his forehead, but he did not bother to wipe it off every time he raised his head from prostration. It remained there because he was so deeply absorbed in his prayer and his khushoo‘ was so strong that he took no notice of it. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Prayer is an occupation in itself.»¹³⁸ Ibn Abi Shaybah reported that Abu ad-Dardâ said, “Even if I were to be rewarded with red camels, I would not like to wipe the gravel from my forehead.” ‘Ayâd commented, “The pious predecessors did not like to wipe their foreheads before they had finished praying.”¹³⁹

Just as you should avoid anything that will distract you from your prayer, by the same token you should avoid disturbing others. This includes:

26. Not disturbing others with your recitation

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «All of you are speaking to your Lord, so do not disturb one another, and do not raise your voices above one another when reciting - or he said - in prayer.»¹⁴⁰ According to another report, he (ﷺ) said: «Do not compete with one another in raising your voices when reciting the Qur’an.»¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Bukhari in *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 3, p. 72

¹³⁹ *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 3, p. 79

¹⁴⁰ Abu Dâwood, vol. 2, p. 83; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 752

¹⁴¹ *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 2, p. 36; *Şaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi‘*, hadith no. 1951

27. Not turning around during the prayer

Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah said: «Allah (ﷻ) continues to turn towards His slave whilst he is praying, so long as he does not turn away, but if he turns away, (Allah) turns away from him.»¹⁴²

Turning away during the prayer can mean either or both of the following:

1. The turning away of the heart to something other than Allah.
2. The turning away of the eyes.

Both of these actions are forbidden, and are detrimental to the reward for the prayer. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was asked about turning away during the prayer, and he (ﷺ) said: «It is something that Satan steals from a person's prayer.»¹⁴³

A person who turns away with his heart or his eyes during prayer is like a man who is called by the ruler and made to stand before him, and when the ruler starts to address him, he turns away, looking to the right and the left, not listening to what the ruler is saying and not understanding a word of it, because his heart and mind are elsewhere. What does this man think the ruler will do to him? The least that he deserves is that when he leaves the ruler, he is hated and no longer valued. One who prays like this is not equal to one who prays with the proper presence of mind, turning to Allah in his prayer in such a way that he feels the greatness of the One before Whom he is standing, and he is filled

¹⁴² Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 909; *Ṣaḥeeḥ Abu Dâwood*

¹⁴³ Bukhari, 'The Book of the Adhân', the chapter on turning away during the prayer

with fear and submission. He feels too shy before his Lord to turn to anyone else or to turn away. The difference between their prayers is as Ḥasan ibn ‘Aṭīyah said:

The two men may be in one congregation, but the difference in virtue between them is as great as the distance between heaven and earth. One of them is turning with all his heart towards Allah, whilst the other is negligent and forgetful.¹⁴⁴

As for turning away for a good reason, this is all right. Abu Dâwood reported that Sahl ibn al-Ḥandhaliyah said: «We started the dawn prayer, and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was looking out at the ravine.» Abu Dâwood explained, “He had sent a horseman at night to guard the ravine.”

This is like when he (ﷺ) carried Umâmah bint Abul ‘Âṣ (a toddler), and when he opened the door for ‘Â’ishah, and when he came down from the pulpit whilst praying in order to teach them, and when he stepped back during the special prayer at the time of an eclipse, and when he grasped and strangled Satan when the devil wanted to interrupt his prayer. He (ﷺ) also ordered that snakes and scorpions should be killed even during prayer, and a person who is praying should prevent and even fight someone who wants to pass in front of him or her whilst he or she is praying. He (ﷺ) told women to clap during prayer (if they notice a mistake on the part of the imam), and he used to wave or gesture to people who greeted him whilst he was praying. These and other actions may be done in cases of necessity, but if there is no necessity, then they are just idle gestures that cancel out khushoo‘, and are therefore not allowed during the prayer.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ *Al-Wâbil aṣ-Ṣayib* by Ibn al-Qayyim, Dâr al-Bayân, p. 36

¹⁴⁵ *Majmoo‘ al-Fatâwâ*, vol. 22, p. 559

28. Not raising your gaze to the heavens

The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade us to do this and issued a warning against it. He (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you is praying, he should not lift his gaze to the heavens, lest he lose his sight.»¹⁴⁶ According to another narration, he (ﷺ) said: «What is wrong with people who lift their gaze to the heavens whilst they are praying?» According to another report of this hadith, he (ﷺ) said: «...that they raise their gaze when they supplicate during ṣalâh?»¹⁴⁷ He (ﷺ) spoke out strongly against it, to the extent that he (ﷺ) said: «Let them stop it, or their eyesight will be taken away.»¹⁴⁸

29. Not spitting in front of you during the prayer

This is incompatible with humility, devotion and good manners before Allah (ﷻ). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When any one of you is praying, let him not spit in front of himself, for Allah is before him when he prays.»¹⁴⁹

He (ﷺ) also said: «When any one of you stands up to pray, he should not spit in front of himself, because he is talking to Allah (ﷻ) as long as he is in his prayer place; and (if he cannot avoid spitting) he should spit to his left, or beneath his feet, and bury it.»¹⁵⁰ He (ﷺ) explained: «When one of you stands to pray, he is talking to his Lord, and his Lord is between him and the qibla, so none of you should spit in the direction of his qibla, but to his left or under his feet.»¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 294; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 762

¹⁴⁷ Muslim, hadith no. 429

¹⁴⁸ *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 258; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi'*, hadith no. 5574

¹⁴⁹ Bukhari in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ*, hadith no. 397

¹⁵⁰ Bukhari, in *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 1, p. 512, hadith no. 416

¹⁵¹ Bukhari, in *Fath al-Bâri*, vol. 1, p. 513, hadith no. 417

If the mosque is furnished with carpets and so on, as is the norm nowadays, if you need to spit, you can take out a handkerchief or tissue, spit into it, and put it away again.

30. Not yawning during the prayer

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If any one of you feels the urge to yawn during prayer, let him suppress it as much as he can, lest Satan enter...»¹⁵² If the devil enters, he will be able to disturb the worshipper's khushoo', in addition to laughing at him when he yawns.

31. Not putting your hands on your hips when praying

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said: «The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade putting the hands on the hips during prayer.»¹⁵³

Ziyâd ibn Subayh al-Ḥanafî said: «I prayed beside Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) and I put my hand on my hip, but he struck my hand. When he had finished praying, he said: This is crossing in prayer. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to forbid this.»¹⁵⁴

It was reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «This posture is how the people of Hell rest; we seek refuge with Allah from that.»¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Muslim, vol. 4, hadith no. 2293

¹⁵³ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 947; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhâri*, the section on 'what ruins the prayer'

¹⁵⁴ Aḥmad (vol. 2, p. 106) and others; graded as sound by Al-Ḥâfidh in *Takhreej al-Iḥyâ'* (See *Irwâ' al-Ghaleel*, vol. 2, p. 94)

¹⁵⁵ Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Abu Hurayrah; Al-'Irâqî said that its chain appeared to be sound.

32. For men only: not letting your clothes drag on the ground during prayer

It was reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade men from letting their clothes drag on the ground during prayer, or for a man to cover his mouth.¹⁵⁶ Al-Khaṭṭābī explained that the Arabic word that the Prophet (ﷺ) used in his statement meant “when one’s clothes are long enough to touch the ground.”¹⁵⁷ Scholars have said, “Letting one’s clothes sweep the ground is completely forbidden because it has to do with showing off, and in prayer it is even worse.”¹⁵⁸

According to scholars, the reason it is forbidden to cover your mouth is because that prevents a person from reciting the Qur’an and prostrating properly.¹⁵⁹

33. Avoiding the postures and movements of animals

Allah (ﷻ) has honoured the children of Adam and created them in the best way, so it is shameful for the children of Adam to resemble or imitate animals. We have been forbidden to resemble or imitate a number of postures or movements of animals when we pray, either because it is harmful to one’s humility and devotion or because it looks ungraceful and does not befit the worshipper who is praying. For example, it was reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade three things in prayer: «Pecking like a crow, stretching out one’s forearms (along the ground) like a carnivore, or always praying in the same place like

¹⁵⁶ Abu Dâwood, hadith no. 643; *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Jâmi’*, hadith no. 6883; a reliable hadith

¹⁵⁷ *Awn al-Ma’bood*, vol. 2, p. 347

¹⁵⁸ *Marqât al-Mafâteeh*, vol. 2, p. 236

¹⁵⁹ *Marqât al-Mafâteeh*, op. cit.

a camel (keeping to its own territory).»¹⁶⁰ It was explained that when a man always prays in the same place in the mosque, making it his own, it is like a camel keeping to its own territory.¹⁶¹

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah: «He [Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)] forbade me to peck (in prostration) like a cockerel, to sit (on the haunches) like a dog or to turn (or look) around like a fox.»¹⁶²

In this booklet I have tried to discuss all the means of attaining humility and devotion, so that we may strive for them, and to point out the things that detract from khushoo‘, to which scholars attach such importance that they are worthy of mention here.

The ruling on repeating the prayer due to the lack of khushoo‘

When a person suffers a great deal of waswâs (insinuating thoughts from Satan) in his prayer, is his prayer valid or does he have to repeat it?

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote:

It was asked, what do you say concerning the prayer of one who has no khushoo‘: does he have to repeat it or not?

With regard to whether it will count for the purposes of reward, it will not be counted except for (the parts) where one is focused and has the correct attitude of humility and devotion towards one’s Lord. Ibn ‘Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said, “You will gain nothing from your prayer except what you focus on.” In the *Musnad* it is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

¹⁶⁰ *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 3, p. 428

¹⁶¹ *Al-Fath al-Rabbâni*, vol. 4, p. 91

¹⁶² *Ahmad*, vol. 2, p. 311; *Shaheeh at-Targheeb*, hadith no. 556

«A person may offer a prayer, and nothing will be recorded of it for him except half of it, or a third, or a quarter... or a tenth.»

Allah (ﷻ) has made the success of the worshipper in prayer dependent on his or her humility and devotion, and has indicated that those who have no *khushoo'* will not be among the successful, but if it is counted for them for the purpose of reward, they will be among the successful ones. With regard to this matter, if you have focused with proper *khushoo'* for most of the prayer, it is acceptable, according to scholarly consensus. The *sunnah* prayers and phrases of remembrance recited after prayer may make up for anything that is lacking.

In the case where there was no humility, devotion or proper focus for most of the prayer, however, there is a difference of opinion among the scholars of jurisprudence. Ibn Hâmid, one of the companions of Aḥmad, thought it obligatory to repeat the prayer. These scholars also differed with regard to *khushoo'* in the prayer, and there are two scholarly opinions on this point. They are to be found in the Ḥanbali *madh-hab*¹⁶³ and others.

These opinions differ as to whether it is obligatory to repeat prayers in which one encountered a great deal of *waswâs*. Ibn Hâmid, one of the companions of Aḥmad, said that it was obligatory, but the majority of scholars of *fiqh*¹⁶⁴ do not share this view.

They take as evidence the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded the one who gets mixed up in his prayer to do two prostrations of forgetfulness; he did not say that the prayer had to be repeated, even though he said: «...the devil comes to any one of you when you are praying and says:

¹⁶³ *madh-hab*: school of juristic thought

¹⁶⁴ *fiqh*: lit. 'understanding'; Islamic jurisprudence

Remember such and such, remember such and such, about something that he had forgotten, until he misguides you to the extent that you do not know how much you have prayed.»

There is no dispute regarding the fact that there is no reward for the prayer except for the portion in which a person had proper presence of mind, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A person may offer a prayer, and nothing will be recorded of it for him except half of it, or a third, or a quarter...or a tenth.»

Ibn ‘Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said, “You will gain nothing from your prayer except what you focus on.” So (the prayer) is not correct if you are looking at it from the point of view that it has to be perfect, but it may be regarded as valid in the sense that we are not commanded to repeat it.¹⁶⁵

Bukhari reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When the muadhdhin calls the adhân, Satan runs away farting, so that he will not hear the adhân. When the adhân is over, he comes back. When the prayer starts, he runs away (because of the utterance, ‘I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the outcast’), but once it is in progress, he comes back, until he comes between a man and his own soul, and says: Remember such and such, remember such and such, which (the worshipper) had forgotten, until he cannot remember how much he has prayed. If any one of you experiences this, let him do two prostrations of forgetfulness whilst he is sitting.»

The scholars commented on this hadith, explaining that the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded the worshipper, with regard to this prayer in which the devil made him forget how much he had prayed, to perform the two prostrations of forgetfulness. He did

¹⁶⁵ *Madârij as-Sâlikeen*, vol. 1, p. 112

not command him to repeat the prayer. If the prayer was invalid — as some claim — he (ﷺ) would have told him to repeat it.

These scholars explained:

This is the reason for the two prostrations of forgetfulness — to annoy Satan for whispering insinuating thoughts to a person and coming between him and his own soul when he is praying. For this reason, these two prostrations are also called *al-murghimatayn* (the two annoying ones).¹⁶⁶

In summary, if you say that the prayer has to be repeated, so as to gain the benefits and rewards, then that is up to the individual. If he wants to gain those benefits, he can, and if he wants to miss out, he can. If you say that we have to force people to repeat the prayer and punish them if they do not, applying to them the rulings on those who forsake prayer, then this is not right. This is the more correct of the two opinions. And Allah (ﷻ) knows best.

¹⁶⁶ *Madârij al-Sâlikeen*, vol. 1, pp. 528-530

Conclusion

Khushoo' is a serious, major issue, and a state which is impossible to achieve without the help of Allah. Being deprived of humility and devotion is nothing short of a calamity. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say in his supplication: «O Allah, I seek refuge with You from a heart that has no khushoo'... [*Allâhumma innée a'oodhu bika min qalbin lâ yakhshâ'...*]»¹⁶⁷

Those who have humility and devotion are of varying levels or degrees. *Khushoo'* is an action of the heart that may increase and decrease. Some people have khushoo' as great as the clouds of the sky, and others may finish their prayer without having understood anything at all.

When it comes to prayer, people are of five levels

The first is the level of a person who wrongs him or herself and is negligent. S/he does not perform ablution properly, pray at the right time or make sure s/he does all the necessary parts of prayer.

The second is a person who observes the outward essentials of prayer, prays on time and performs ablution correctly, but s/he has lost the battle against the self and is overwhelmed with insinuating whispers.

The third is a person who observes the outward essentials of prayer, prays on time and performs ablution correctly, and also strives against his or her own self and against waswâs, but is preoccupied with the struggle against his or her enemy (Satan), lest he steal from that person's prayer, so s/he is engaged in ṣalâh and jîhâd at the same time.

¹⁶⁷ At-Tirmidhi, vol. 5, p. 485, hadith no. 3482; *Ṣaḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhi*

The fourth is the person who fulfils all the requirements of the prayer when s/he stands up to pray, and his or her heart is fully focused and alert lest s/he omit anything, and his or her concern is to do the prayer properly and perfectly. This person's heart is deeply immersed in prayer and the worship of Allah.

The fifth is a person who does all of that, but also takes his or her heart and places it before Allah, looking at the Lord with his/her heart and focusing on Him, filled with love and adoration, as if s/he is actually seeing Him. That waswâs and those thoughts diminish, and the barriers between this worshipper and his/her Lord are lifted. The difference between the prayer of this person and the prayer of anyone else is greater than the difference between heaven and earth. When this person prays, s/he is preoccupied with Allah and content with Him.

The first type is to be punished, the second is held accountable, the third is striving so s/he is not counted as a sinner, the fourth is rewarded and the fifth is drawn close to Allah, because s/he is one of those for whom prayer is a source of joy. Whoever finds their joy in prayer in this life, will find their joy in being close to Allah (ﷻ) in the Hereafter, and will also find their joy in Allah in this world. Whoever finds joy in Allah (ﷻ) will be content with everything; whoever does not find joy in Allah will be destroyed by their feelings of grief and regret for worldly matters.¹⁶⁸

Finally, we ask Allah (ﷻ) to make us among those who are humble and devoted in worship, and to accept our repentance. May He reward with good all those who helped to prepare this book and may He benefit all those who read it; *Âmeen*. All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

¹⁶⁸ *Al-Wâbil aṣ-Ṣayib*, p. 40

Glossary *

<i>adhân</i>	أذان	the call to prayer
<i>âmeen</i>	آمين	O Allah, accept our invocation; amen
<i>‘awrah</i>	عورة	the part of a person’s body that must be screened from public view; for males it is the area between the navel and the knees, and for females it is everything except the hands and the face
<i>Dajjâl</i>	الدَّجَال	Antichrist
<i>da‘wah</i>	دعوة	disseminating the teachings of Islam and calling people to accept and embrace Islam
<i>fiqh</i>	فقه	Islamic jurisprudence; understanding or interpreting Islamic law
<i>Hadith</i> (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حديث	the collected sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur’an form the basis of Islamic law
<i>hadith</i> (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حديث	a saying or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>hadith qudsi</i>	حديث قديمي	‘sacred hadith’: a hadith communicated to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) by Allah, but that is not part of the Qur’an

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e. is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

<i>Al-Hâfidh</i>	الحافظ	‘the one who has memorized (the Qur’an)’: an honorific title
<i>Iblees</i>	إبليس	another name for Satan in Arabic
<i>iqâmah</i>	إقامة	the call to rise for prayer, given when the prayer is about to begin
<i>jiḥad (jihâd)</i>	جهاد	struggle or striving (in Allah’s cause)
<i>Ka‘bah</i>	الكلبة	the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrâheem and Ismâ‘eel
<i>madh-hab</i>	مذهب	school of juristic thought
<i>maghrib</i>	مغرب	sunset; the obligatory prayer at that time
<i>miswâk</i> (also <i>siwâk</i>)	مسواك	a small twig (<i>usu.</i> of the Arâk tree) used as a toothbrush
<i>mu’adh-dhin</i>	مؤذن	caller to prayer; one who makes the adhân
<i>qibla (qiblah)</i>	القبلة	the bearing from the Kaaba to any point on Earth; the direction that all Muslims must face in prayer
<i>qiyâm al-layl</i>	قيام الليل	lit. ‘standing the night’; getting up to pray supererogatory prayers during the late night and early morning before fajr; see <i>tahajjud</i>
<i>rukoo‘</i>	ركوع	the act of bowing (in prayer)
<i>sajdah</i>	سجدة	an act of prostration (in prayer)
<i>ṣalât or ṣalâh</i>	صلاة	formal prayer: a combination of physical postures, recitation and supplication
<i>sharia (shari‘ah)</i>	شريعة	Islamic law derived from the Qur’an and the Sunnah
<i>soorah</i> or <i>soorat</i>	سورة	chapter of the Qur’an

<i>Sunnah</i>	سنة	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
<i>sutrah</i>	سترة	a symbolic barrier placed in front of a praying person so that others do not pass directly in front of the worshiper
<i>tâbi'oon</i> (sg. <i>tâbi'ee</i>)	التابعون	those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them
<i>tafseer</i>	تفسير	exegesis: commentary, or explanation of the meanings (<i>usu.</i> of Qur'anic verses)
<i>tahajjud</i>	تهجد	voluntary night prayer offered between 'ishâ' and fajr
<i>tashahhud</i>	التشهد	the testimony that states that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, He has no partners, and that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His Slave and His Messenger
<i>tasleem(ah)</i>	تسليم	the act of saying <i>as-salâmu 'alaykum wa rahmat Allâh</i> to end the prayer
<i>tarteel</i>	ترتيل	reciting (the Qur'an) in slow, rhythmic tones
<i>Ummah</i>	أمة	community or nation: <i>usu.</i> used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims
<i>waswâs</i>	وسواس	lit. whispering; insinuating whispers/ thoughts from Satan
<i>wuḍoo'</i>	وضوء	ablution required before prayer or touching the Qur'an